

日本体育大学紀要 22 卷 1 号 (1992) 63-66

## Stressed Final Consonant +oo as a Non-Assimilating Linguistic Pattern

Anzen AKIYAMA\*

(Received 26 May 1992; accepted for publication 1 July 1992)

This article will examine the case of English words with a final stressed /u/, spelled with final oo, preceded by a consonant; consonant+oo is here written as: C+oo. The relationship between final C+oo, final syllable stress and the language family origin of selected lexical items will be discussed. It will then be concluded that there is a strong correlation between certain loan words of non-European linguistic origin and final syllable stress on C+oo.

0. English language lexical items with final C+oo, e.g. *bamboo* and *shampoo* use oo as a spelling convention indicating stress and therefore belong to an identifiable group of words which carry the stress accent on the final syllable.<sup>1</sup> The nature of borrowing into the English language is complex and yet in most cases loan words have been anglicized to the point where native speakers of English are not aware of the origin of many words or, indeed, that the words in question have a "foreign" origin. This would apply equally to lexical items from French (*fork/forkette*), German (*kindergarten*), Spanish (*patio*), Japanese (*rickshaw*), etc.

It is the exception in Modern English, therefore, to manifest cases in which linguistic borrowings have been treated in a non-assimilating manner. Or, to express in different terms, that the nature of the assimilation process becomes one of distinguishing origin. The case in point, final C+oo, may be regarded as a mechanism both visual and audio (spelling and sound), which serves to set apart borrowings in such a way as to identify their non-English, sources. This particular C+oo device is additionally, in effect, reserved for certain borrowings of East Indian/Polynesian origin. It will also be observed that this mechanism does not as a rule apply to borrowings from other languages, namely those of Europe and the Americas or of their respective linguistic extensions.

1. As the predominant stress/accent pattern in English is on the penultimate syllable (applying to words of two or more syllables) it is therefore the small number of exceptions that point to matters which call for recognition. Indeed, it is likely that most native speakers will give pause when encountering words outside this penultimate stress pattern.<sup>2</sup> Whether the word is in a text (written/visual) or contained in an utterance (audio) it will be immediately perceived that a special

---

\* Foreign Language Department

case has been encountered. As a rule, all words taken into the English language are treated as words of English origin, in terms of stress patterns, in the same way with the penultimate stress pattern. This is normally the case regardless of the language of origin. Numerous examples may be cited but two would be sufficient to make the point here. Recent borrowings from the Japanese language include *sumó* which has become *súmo* in standard current English. An older borrowing from the French language, *mádemoiselle* is normally pronounced *mademoíselle* in English.

In words where the language of origin has the penultimate stress, that stress is maintained, again because this is the dominant pattern in English. Thus Spanish *fiésta* is also *fiésta* in English; from Dutch, *Hóllands* remains *Hólland*, and so forth.

2. Borrowings into English which exhibit the exceptional case of C+oo endings may be identified as a distinct group. The words in English, by count, which may be considered to have final C+oo number about sixty (see Note 3, for the complete list). The high frequency lexical items from this group (identified in bold type in the notes) will serve as clear examples of the C+oo pattern. This group of the following five words which are identified by their origins are all used in everyday English.

WORD	LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN
<i>bamboo</i>	Malay
<i>kangaroo</i>	Australian
<i>shampoo</i>	Hindi
<i>taboo</i>	Tongan
<i>tattoo</i>	Tahitian

What is of particular significance here is that this group of words all have their origins in Polynesia, the East Indies or India. As this part of the world is relatively far removed in space and time both from Great Britain and from North America, these words represent items that, at least initially, were regarded as extremely exotic and therefore warranted a linguistic treatment appropriate to the feeling and nature attributed to the items. It would be even reasonable to state that this C+oo non-penultimate stress pattern has been largely reserved for lexical items having their origins in the East Indian part of the world. The rare exceptions will be shown to exhibit the quality of sharing an exotic connotation and thus correspond to one connotative pattern.

3. Referring again to the list of all words ending in C+oo, the examples *cariboo* and *igloo*, while certainly exotic, in a sense, are not identified with the East Indian part of the world and therefore, have not been fitted with this non-penultimate stress pattern. European origin also, as in the case of *cuckoo* (while C+oo) produces the usual penultimate stress. None of these words then, modify the point made above.

The only words that may be cited as being true exceptions to the observations here would be

of a particular nature and worth identifying. *Parleyvoo* with the non-penultimate C+oo pattern is, of course, clearly French and not East Indian in origin. The interesting point identified here is, however, that the word or, more accurately, expression *parleyvoo* is intended to be used in English only as a sort of pseudo-French, meaning either the French language itself or, secondarily, a person from France who may also be deemed unlikely to understand English. Needless to say, such a designation is not a sophisticated one. What this does point out is that in relation to issues of C+oo is that the non-penultimate stress serves to emphasize the exotic nature of France (to some people), and this is done with the correspondingly unsophisticated device of appending the C+oo stress pattern to a word/expression that would normally not be applied to the French language. It is then, the possibility of this non-penultimate stress pattern in English which supports the theory proposed above.

4. The significance of the non-penultimate stress pattern of certain instances of C+oo have, in linguistic terms, a particular identity. This device in English is reserved for borrowings from the East Indian part of the world and is applied to words for the purpose of maintaining their exotic flavor, i.e. their identity as unassimilated or partly assimilated lexical items.

The great weight of the dominate penultimate stress pattern may eventually modify these few interesting exceptions which in fact, may now be in the process of changing. Particularly the word *shampóo* which in its verbal form has assumed the reverse stress, *shámpoo*, is a striking example. This phenomenon exemplifies the changes which are taking place in the modern language and it is for this reason that the only important lexical items to consider here are those of relatively high frequency: thus subject to the influences of the spoken language patterns.

There remains as well the possibility that new borrowings into English from the East Indies may fall into this predictable pattern but it would be also reasonable to speculate that new borrowings from other languages may, at this late juncture, be treated as non-penultimate stressed. For these, and other reasons, further research should be undertaken. A historical perspective requiring precise study of the stress pattern change in other cases of now obsolescent -oo Note 3 may be able to identify the various influences that were at work in other times and places. It may also be possible to identify differences in treatment between, for example, Australian English and American English and their respective manner of assimilation.

### Notes

1. Toshio Gunshi: *A Pocket Inverted Dictionary*, (Tokyo: Kaibunsha Ltd., 1967), p. 299.
2. Native speaker informants.
3. List of words ending in C+oo:

achoo	gillaroo	karroo	sissoo
baboo	gooroo	kazoo	skiddoo
ballyhoo	halloo	kickapoo	<b>taboo</b>
<b>bamboo</b>	hickaboo	koodoo	<b>tattoo</b>
bazoo	hoochinoo	napoo	tickacktoo
boogaloo	hoodoo	nardoo	tittattoo
boohoo	hoopoo	parleyvoo	turakoo
buckaroo	hullabaloo	peekaboo	voodoo
bugaboo	hulloo	pookoo	wahoo
burgoo	igloo	pulldoo	wallaroo
cariboo	jackaroo	puttoo	wandaroo
cashoo	jadoo	rattatoo	Waterloo
cockatoo	jamboo	razoo	yaboo
cuckoo	<b>kangaroo</b>	<b>shampoo</b>	Yahoo
Gentoo	karoo	shapoo	

### Bibliography

- 1) Gunshi, Toshio: *A Pocket Inverted English Dictionary*, Kaibunsha Ltd., Tokyo, 1967.
- 2) Lehnert, Martin: *Rückläufiges Wörterbuch der englischen Gegenwartssprache*, VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie, Leipzig, 1971.
- 3) Yasui, Minoru: *Sound and Spelling*, Kenkyusha Ltd., Tokyo, 1955.